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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

November 16, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger K

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Ambassador Bunker
Tuesday, November 17, 1970 at 10:45 a.m.

You are scheduled to meet with Ambassador Bunker Tuesday morning after your session with the Republican Congressional Leadership. This meeting with the Ambassador just before he returns to Saigon from his home leave will give you a good opportunity to reaffirm the main lines of your Vietnam policy and, in particular, to get the Ambassador's views on various political factors that will loom large in the coming months.

Introduction

-- You greatly appreciate the Ambassador's continued willingness to serve his country in his crucial and demanding assignment.

-- His experience, insight, and diplomatic skill will be invaluable during the coming months leading up to the 1971 elections in Vietnam.

-- You would like today to explore in particular his views on some of the delicate political problems we will be facing.

Vice President Ky and GVN Political Proposals. You will be seeing Ky for breakfast on Tuesday, November 24. He is currently touring U.S. military installations and, after his visit with you, he will see former President Johnson and appear on "Meet the Press." As you are aware from my recent memorandum, we have received several reports that Ky is considering various possible political proposals to make to the Communists, including some formulations that would appear to go a long way toward the NLF positions. While he has discussed this general subject with Thieu, it is not certain that they have any mutual understanding and Ky's motives are not clear. I suggest you:

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-- ask the Ambassador for his general assessment of Ky and his political intentions; request his suggestions on how to handle your meeting with Ky;

-- in particular, solicit the Ambassador's views on what Ky has in mind with regard to possible GVN negotiating proposals and on how closely he is working with Thieu on these issues;

-- tell the Ambassador that we plan to be very cautious in any discussions of GVN political proposals that Ky may initiate (the latest information from the South Vietnamese Ambassador here is that Ky does not plan to raise this issue with you but that he might with me);

-- instruct Ambassador Bunker to make clear to Thieu that we will continue to communicate with him directly through Ambassador Bunker on important matters, i.e. we will not filter our views through Vice President Ky.

1971 Elections in South Vietnam. Next fall will be the crucial elections for the Presidency and the Assembly, and the jockeying in Vietnam and drawing up of slates of candidates will soon begin. Communist strategy will certainly include efforts to sow as much political dissension as possible among the non-Communist elements in South Vietnam and to create friction between Saigon and Washington. We will thus be entering a very demanding diplomatic period and Ambassador Bunker's role will be especially delicate. I suggest you ask Ambassador Bunker for his views on:

-- the prospects for the elections and the political maneuvering among the various factions during the coming months;

-- specifically, the likely Presidential candidates; whether Thieu and Ky can be expected to cooperate or compete; and Thieu's probable plans (he intimated recently that he might consider not running);

-- Big Minh's intentions, prospects, and capabilities;

-- the U.S. posture toward the elections -- i.e., our public position, the impact of our policy actions, and our private responses to Thieu if he should ask our views on his running.

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Other Subjects. If time permits, you may wish to request Ambassador Bunker's views on the following subjects:

-- the pace of Vietnamization and our troop withdrawals after this spring;

-- which programs in South Vietnam we should particularly stress, e.g. economic and social programs, anti-corruption, police programs, psychological warfare, land reform;

-- the GVN's positions on the provisions of a ceasefire and the likely political and psychological impact if a ceasefire actually takes place.